

# ARTICLES OF FAITH

by

His Eminence, Ephraim

Metropolitan of Boston

Part III

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The following articles are dedicated to our new calendar friends:

- I am a Man Under Authority – Parts One, Two, Three, and Four;
- The Three Steams



## **I AM A MAN UNDER AUTHORITY**

Or

**Pray, Pay, and Obey**

— Part One —

Like Socrates, the philosopher in ancient Athens, I seem to be dying from the feet up. So, I am trying to record some memories on paper before whatever it is that is afflicting me finally gets to my brain.

Whenever I hear the gospel reading about the Roman centurion, I remember an incident from my seminary days. But first, let me refresh your memory about what the gospel account says:

When Jesus was entered into Capernaum there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him and saying, "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." And Jesus saith unto him, "I will come and heal him." The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, 'Go', and he goeth; and to another, 'Come,' and he cometh; and to my servant, 'Do this'; and he doeth it."

(Matthew 8:5-8)

As I said, whenever I hear this, I remember an incident from my seminary days. At that time, there was a fine young man from Pennsylvania attending classes at the seminary. Let's call him Leo Burkhart (not his real name). Leo had been a Mennonite, but had converted to Orthodoxy. He was a serious young man, and he was very bright and diligent in his studies.

He also had some concerns. He told us that he had come to Orthodoxy because he had read some Orthodox literature (in those days, there was not much in English), and he was immensely impressed. The loftiness and the profundity of the Church's doctrine and spirituality had really gone to his heart. I recall his saying that he had read also the newly-published book, *Three Byzantine Saints*, and he marveled at the spiritual achievements of the saints described there.

Well, a number of us were getting pretty tired of this. We thought that this was, supposedly, an Orthodox Christian seminary. So, one day, one of our braver classmates raised his hand in class. But, as I mentioned above, he also had some concerns. His concerns were these: he

saw *nothing* of what he had read about Orthodoxy in today's "Orthodox" parishes. Instead, he saw a very secular spirit, a spirit of concern about *ethnic* identity that prevailed over concern for an Orthodox Christian identity. In the parishes he had attended, the parishioners knew more about the gods of Mount Olympus than they did about the Saints of the Church. The Fathers of the Church were virtually unknown in the parishes. Hardly anybody knew what the Church feasts were all about (since the highly abbreviated services were all in an ancient language, completely foreign to them.) Nobody had heard of the Apostle's Fast, and what fasts *were* kept were not kept very seriously, even by many of the clergy. "This is America," they said, "we work hard here, so we can't keep all those insane fasts, like they do in the old country.\*"

Furthermore, gambling, belly dancers, social affairs on Saturday evenings (instead of Vespers, or a vigil for the Resurrection of Christ) were predominant. Whenever anybody mentioned the "canons of the Church", there was always somebody else to mention how outdated, or antiquated, or irrelevant the canons were. Then, of course, there was also what he was presently hearing in the classes in the seminary....

So Leo had concerns, and he told us about them. Some laughed at him and told him to "lighten up" and not take things so seriously. Others suggested that he talk to the bishop about this, and see what he had to say. So Leo did just that.

The very next day, Leo walked from the seminary to the Greek jurisdiction's diocese house, which at that time, was in Jamaica Plain (a suburb of Boston). When he got there after a twenty-five minute walk, he was cordially invited in by the bishop himself.

Leo carefully explained all his above-mentioned concerns to His Grace, who listened to him attentively and silently. When, at last, Leo mentioned the canons, the bishop finally responded (whereas to all of Leo's other concerns, he had been silent), and the bishop's thoughtful response was this: "My boy, many years ago, our archbishop asked me to prepare a study about the canons — a paper concerning which canons were applicable today. After a long study of all the canons, I came to the conclusion that only one canon is applicable today.

"Only one?" responded Leo. Later, as he was relating all this to us back at the seminary, Leo said that he thought to himself, "My gosh, there

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\*Apparently, nobody works in the old country?

are 777 holy canons, and only one is still applicable?" So Leo asked the bishop, "Which canon might that be?"

"Obedience to the bishop," responded the bishop.

Flabbergasted, Leo looked steadfastly at the bishop for a moment, and finally said, "Well, thank you, Your Grace." With that, he arose, got the bishop's blessing and left the diocese house.

Upon returning to the seminary, Leo told us, "Here I thought that I had converted to Orthodox Christianity. I didn't realize that I had actually become a papist."

Not long after that, Leo left the seminary, and I never learned what happened to him. I felt bad about Leo, because he was such a good and sincere young man. I was sorry, especially, about the bishop, who had so seriously misled Leo. Of course, there are a number of holy canons, which concern themselves not only with the bishop's prerogatives, but also with his obligations. Indeed, there are also holy canons that mete out punishments to bishops when they are remiss in their duties. For example, there is the 58<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Canon, which says:

If any bishop or presbyter neglects the clergy or the laity, and fails to instruct them in piety, let him be excommunicated; but if he persists in his negligence and indolence, let him be deposed from office.

In an earlier article ("The Trip to New Hampshire" — Part Two) I mentioned what Saint John Chrysostom says in his work, *On the Priesthood*, about how a priest and bishop should govern. In that article, I mentioned also what Saint Isaac of Syria said about this same subject.

In the Life of Saint John the Almsgiver, Patriarch of Alexandria, there is another interesting lesson to be gleaned (when reading this account, keep in mind that, in those days, the Patriarch of Alexandria was the second most powerful man in the Christian Roman Empire, and one of the wealthiest also, after the emperor himself):

The glorious man [St. John the Almsgiver] had a nephew named George. One day this nephew had a quarrel with one of the shopkeepers in the town and was grievously insulted by him. George was bitterly vexed, not only because he had been publicly dishonored, but more because it had been at the hands

of a lowly fellow, and most of all because he [i.e., George] was the nephew of the Patriarch; so, weeping bitterly, he went to see the Patriarch in his private room. When the gentle Patriarch beheld him so distressed and tearful, he inquired the reason for his state of misery, wishing to learn what had caused it.

George, however, could not himself give a clear statement because of the bitterness of soul which had overmastered him; accordingly his companions who had been present when this insult was put upon him by the shopkeeper began to explain the reason to the Patriarch. "It is not right", they said, "for your Holiness to be so despised that your relatives and kinsfolk should be insulted by abandoned creatures."

Then he who was indeed a true physician wished first to treat his nephew's inflammation, as it were with a soothing salve, and afterwards, by his wise words, to cut out and remove the source of pain as if by the knife. Accordingly, he began to allay his suffering by these words: "What? Did someone actually dare to open his mouth and shout recriminations at you? Trust me, child, and I, your father, will do a thing to him today at which all Alexandria will be astonished." When he saw that his nephew was calmed and had shaken off all his grief (for he imagined that the Patriarch would proceed against the man who had insulted him and have him scourged and paraded in public by the overseer of the market), the Patriarch kissed his breast and said to him, "Boy, if you are in reality the nephew of my humbleness, prepare yourself to be beaten and insulted by everybody: for true relationship is not declared through flesh and blood, but through the virtue of the soul."

He immediately summoned the overseer of the shopkeepers and ordered him never in the future to accept from that shopkeeper either his customary "tip" or the public taxes or the rent for the shop, for this shop, too, belonged to the Holy Church.

All were amazed at the Patriarch's unshaken magnanimity, and understood that this was what he meant when he said, "I will do a thing to him which will astonish all Alexandria", i.e. to show him favor instead of taking revenge on him.

(chap. 16)\*

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\**Three Byzantine Saints*, translated by Elizabeth Dawes and Norman Baynes, Oxford, 1948

If the Greek bishop had really wanted to edify our young convert, Leo, he could have told him, not that all are to obey the bishop, but that the bishop himself is the servant of all the faithful, as Saint John Chrysostom points out in his work *On the Priesthood*. Or, the bishop might have told Leo that a bishop must be free from rancor and spitefulness, even when others offend him, and he might have quoted this text from Saint Isidore of Mt. Pelusium:

If you were wounded by words and you exploded in unrestrained fury, how can you be a worker in the vineyard of the Lord? (Matt. 29:1-16). Because, he who is struck on the one cheek and can turn the other (Matt. 5:39) is the one of whom the Lord speaks, when He says that *he* is the one that hath borne the burden and the heat of the day, meaning that he hath fulfilled His commandments perfectly.

(PG 78:249bc)

Perhaps the best thing our Greek hierarch could have told Leo regarding the role of a bishop is what we hear in the hymns of the Church during Holy Week:

Let your rule be contrary to the order found among the peoples of the nations. For tyranny and an insolent mind are not My portion. Let him, therefore, that would be chief among you be as the least of all.

*[Troparion of the 8<sup>th</sup> Ode of the Matins  
of Great and Holy Monday]*

I think this would have helped Leo a great deal in resolving his concerns. Maybe it might have given him enough encouragement to survive the secularized parish life and even our "Latin Captivity" seminary classes....

Instead, Leo left. Maybe he was trying to find an *Orthodox* bishop.\*

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\*After more than fifty years, I have just learned that Leo left for Greece to continue his studies there. However, I have no idea what happened to him after that.



**I AM A MAN UNDER AUTHORITY**  
or  
**The Bigger the Boys, the Bigger the Toys**

Part Two

The representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch addressed Saint Maximus: "Will you enter into communion with our Church, or not?"

"No, I will not enter into communion," replied the Saint.

"Why?" inquired the representative.

"Because she has rejected the rulings of the Orthodox councils," replied the Saint.

"But if our Church has renounced the councils," objected the representative, "then how is it that they are inscribed in the diptychs?"

"What profit is there in naming them and recalling them, if the dogmas of these councils are rejected?" was the Saint's reply.

"Can you demonstrate clearly," asked the representative, "that the present Church at Constantinople has rejected the dogmas of the former councils?"

"If you refrain from anger, and command me to do so, I can demonstrate it easily," replied the Saint.

*(From the Life of St. Maximus the Confessor)\**

"You are outside of the Church!" That is what one "World Orthodoxy" bishop told one of our faithful when he told the bishop that he was under the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston.

Of course, before anyone can say that sort of thing, he has to be sure that he himself is *in* the Church, to begin with. After all, "people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones," right?

How can we tell if we are in or out of the Church? Surely, there must be some criteria. To whom can we turn to find the solution to this important question? For those of us who are Orthodox Christians, the answer to that is easy. As the Definition of the Fourth Ecumenical Council says: "We follow in the footsteps of the Holy Fathers." So, as always, we must turn to our Holy Fathers to learn how we can determine whether we are in or out of the

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\**The Life of Our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor*, translated by Fr. Christopher Birchall (Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, Mass., 1982), pp. 43-44.

Church.

To begin with, I assume that we all agree that to be a member of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, we have to be *Orthodox*. (Trust me, you don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure that one out! I think even a licensed theologian *might* be able to understand that issue...)

Number Two: To qualify as an Orthodox Christian in the Church, our believer should also be in communion with a bishop who is *canonical*. That is to say, the bishop in question should have "Apostolic Succession" and he should acknowledge the authority of the holy canons of the Church, the decisions of the Ecumenical and Local Councils, and all the things given to us in Holy Tradition. After all, when "World Orthodoxy" people want to cast reproach on us, the first thing they say is, "You are uncanonical." That means, presumably, that they accept the authority of the holy canons — yes?

Very well, then. Let us now examine this matter carefully in a calm and objective manner, as befits Christians, in the light of the Holy Fathers' teachings and the holy canons.

The first thing we should examine, of course, is if the bishops of these various jurisdictions of "World Orthodoxy" are Orthodox in faith. This is easy: do they always teach the Orthodox Faith? Or, do they teach it sometimes, and at other times teach wrong things? Is their teaching in agreement with the Holy Fathers when they interpret the Holy Scriptures, or is it their own, personal interpretations that they teach? Is their teaching in agreement with the Decisions of the Seven Holy Ecumenical Councils? Have they kept the Three Vows they made publically when they were ordained bishops?

As you can see, there are many criteria. Bishops are not china dolls, or the "princes of the Church," as some have been heard to say (shades of the "Latin Captivity"!); nor are they spoiled little brats that can get away with anything. They are "men under authority," just like everyone else. They are answerable to: 1] God; 2] the Holy Synod and 3] the Orthodox people of God.

So, in light of all that we have written above, let us examine what some "Orthodox" bishops have been saying and doing.

The late Patriarch Athenagoras boasted that he gave communion to both Roman Catholics and Protestants (see *Orthodox Typos*, July 13, 1979). Bishop Kallistos Ware, by his own admission, has given communion to people who refuse to accept the authority of the last four Ecumenical

Councils (just ask him). The Moscow Patriarchate gave communion to Roman Catholics "when no church of their own was nearby" (*New York Times*, February 21, 1970). In his book, *The Thyateira Confession*, Archbishop Athenagoras Kokkinakis, with the official approval of the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios and his Synod, wrote that it is permitted for Roman Catholics and Anglicans to receive communion from the Orthodox, and vice versa. In its book, *A Pastoral Guide to the Holy Mysteries*, the Patriarchate of Antioch says that, in "exceptional situations," the Orthodox may receive communion in non-Orthodox churches.

The matter of giving Holy Communion *only* to those who are of our Faith is very important and very ancient in the Church. For example, Saint Justin the Martyr and Philosopher (+167) describes the Christian Eucharist in his *First Apology*, which he wrote for the Roman emperor Titus and the Roman Senate, and he says:

Among us, this Food is called *Eucharist* (*The Giving of Thanks to God*), of which no one is allowed to partake, except the one who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration (*Holy Baptism*), and who is so living as Christ has commanded. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the Food which is blessed by the prayer of His word...is the Flesh and Blood of that Jesus Who was made flesh.....and He gave it to the disciples **alone**.

(chap. 65)

It should be obvious to all that the above-mentioned bishops do not qualify as *Orthodox* bishops, since they quite openly have violated the Three Vows they made when they were consecrated as bishops and, therefore, cannot be *in* the Church.

What do the Holy Fathers (whose footsteps we are determined to follow, remember?) have to say about this?

According to the rules (i.e., the holy canons)\* these bishops should be "fired," as they say in the world of commerce.

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\*Originally, in Greek, a *kanón* was a rule, a measuring stick, a plumb-line that bricklayers used to determine if the wall they were building were straight. It is a guide-line. So, if a brick is a *little* off, it will not necessarily throw the wall down. In making these rules for the Church, the Holy Fathers did not use the word *nómos*, which means "law," which implies

This is what should be done if we were to follow the rules *strictly*. Is there any wiggle room? Yes. Since the Church is the Body of Christ, and not, say, Chrysler Corporation, the bishops — the C. E. O.'s of the Church — do have some wiggle room, with certain conditions.

The conditions are: the bishop, like anyone else who is an Orthodox Christian, must repent of the un-Orthodox things he is doing and teaching. He must promise that he will not do or teach these un-Orthodox practices or teachings again. If he keeps his promise, then we are once again, one, big, happy family.

But some people tell us: "Our bishops are too proud to do that." Well, how did they become bishops in the first place?

If they are really too proud to say that they are sorry and promise not to do it again, in that case, they will have to be given a penance like everyone else, to help them straighten out.

If the bishops had been bad little boys who misbehaved, they would have been spanked and sent to their rooms for a time. Or, perhaps, if they were in school, they would have had to stand in the corner and wear a dunce cap.

But now, presumably, they have grown up and should know how to behave themselves. After all, everybody else is expected to behave themselves when they grow up, so why should it be otherwise for bishops?

If the first tactic doesn't work for a bratty little boy, what do we do next? We take away his toys.

We have all heard the saying: "The bigger the boys, the bigger the toys."

If he persists in misbehaving, then even his toys — his *dikiri-trikiri*, his mitre, his eagle rug, his staff, etc. — *all* get taken away. In other words, he is "fired," "de-commissioned," "de-fused," "deposed."

Simple, isn't it?

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(continued from previous page) more rigidity. Since we are dealing with human beings, and not bricks, we need some flexibility. As Saint Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain says, this is why the Church uses "two hands" in governing her affairs: strictness and *economia* — for the good and proper administration of the Household of God. In a sense, the collection of the holy canons is like a tool box. The tools are *all* needed, but not at the same place and at the same time. So, you don't throw the tools away, but you use them appropriately. Neither are they all of equal value. Nonetheless, *all are needed* at one point or another.

You see, the Church, like every well-functioning family, knows how to take care of its problems. Its guidelines (that is the *real* meaning of the word "canon") are clear. But if you do not have guidelines, or if you consider the guidelines "old fashioned," or "antiquated," well, then your bishops will begin to act like juvenile delinquents.

But if your bishop is Orthodox in his faith, and teaches this Faith to others, and if he follows the Church's guidelines to the best of his ability, then you must honor, and treasure, and cherish him as though he were a loving father who is a good provider for his family. People like him must be looked up to and revered. Such men are hard to find.

I write these words with fear, my beloved, knowing that — although I strive to be an Orthodox Christian bishop — I am a man unworthy of the priesthood, and I remember the words spoken by Saint Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, when he was explaining the Gospel of Saint Matthew (22:2-14) concerning the master who sent his servants to invite the guests to the wedding feast.

Many things have been written about this particular parable. We have learned the meaning of the term "the wedding feast," and Who the master is. We have been instructed about the friends who refused the invitation, and who are those who finally came, and what is the significance of the wedding garment. But no one has told us about the *servants* who were sent with the invitations. Pope Saint Gregory the Great answers this question:

We should perceive that the servants sent with invitations by the Master of the household represent the preachers of the Church. Being one of them, although unworthy and oppressed by the weight of my sins, nevertheless when I speak for your instruction, I also am a servant of the Master. When I exhort you to despise this world, I come to invite you to God's feast... Let no one despise me, then, for my personal defects: for although I am unworthy, the joys I promise are immense. It often happens, brethren, that a powerful person has a contemptible servant, and when he sends a message by him to relations or to strangers ... those who hear him do not think of the person who speaks, but only of the message he brings and the person whose message it is ... and if perhaps you consider us preachers unworthy, nevertheless venerate God Who calls you through us...

So, since we bishops are only servants, this is all the more reason why we must be certain that the message we bring is true and unaltered.

Otherwise, we will *not* be esteemed faithful stewards.

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## **I AM A MAN UNDER AUTHORITY**

— Or —

Many Copts We Know Are Really Nice People

### Part Three

*The following letter was sent by Metropolitan Ephraim to the editor of a new calendar periodical, in response to an alleged "agreement" between the Orthodox Church and the "Non-Chalcedonians" (those denominations that reject the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Ecumenical Councils).*

Holy Prophets Moses and Aaron  
September 4/17, 2002

Dear . . . ,

I pray that this letter finds you well and with the peace of our Saviour. Amen.

In response to your request, I feel obliged to raise the following questions about the "Agreement" between the non-Chalcedoneans [i.e. "The Monophysites"] and the Orthodox, concerning which you wrote in the last issue of your periodical:

1] If it is only a matter of semantics and a misunderstanding between the two parties, as some maintain, then, I assume, there is no problem for the non-Chalcedoneans to accept the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Ecumenical Councils. Am I correct? Have they done this? I saw no mention of this in your report.

2] Likewise, if it is only a matter of semantics, have the non-Chalcedoneans accepted all the Orthodox Saints that have been glorified in the Church subsequent to the division that occurred between the two parties? Again, your report makes no mention of this.

3) If the non-Chalcedoneans finally acknowledge that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ had two natures — the divine and human — that is wonderful. However, Pope Shenouda, [of the Coptic Church], whom you quote extensively, insists with great emphasis that Christ has but one will. This is the heresy of

Monotheletism, which was condemned at the 6th Ecumenical Council. St Maximus the Confessor had his hand cut off, his tongue ripped out by the Byzantine emperor, and he died in exile in Georgia because he would not agree to this heresy. Does the Agreement which you reported have anything to say about this issue?

4] If, as reported, both parties condemn Eutyches as a heretic, then there is another problem that has to be addressed. At a Council which took place in Ephesus in August of 449 (this is known as the "Robber Council of Ephesus" among the Orthodox Christians) Dioscorus — who is considered a saint by the non-Chalcedoneans — presided. *This false Council affirmed the Orthodoxy and sanctity of Eutyches!* It also deposed and excommunicated Theodoret, St. Flavian, Patriarch of Constantinople and Pope St. Leo of Rome. In addition, the above-mentioned St. Flavian was murdered at that Council. The 4th Ecumenical Council which gathered in Chalcedon in 451, on the other hand, *deposed* Dioscorus because he would *not* denounce the doctrine or the person of Eutyches. In a document to the Emperors Valentinian III and Marcian, the Fathers of the 4th Ecumenical Council sent a copy of the minutes of the 3rd session (Oct. 13, 451) with a letter, in which the reasons for the deposition of Dioscorus were briefly given: that he had suppressed the letter of St. Leo, the Pope of Rome; *that he had received Eutyches into communion*; that he had ill-treated Eusebius of Dorylaeum; that he had excommunicated Pope St. Leo; and that he had not obeyed the Council (See *History of the Councils of the Church*, Vol. 3, by Charles Joseph Hefele, Edinburgh, 1883, p. 329). Again, what does the Agreement have to say about this? Is all this, too, simply a matter of semantics?

If the "Agreement" does not deal with all these issues, then it appears to me that, sad to say, *your ["World Orthodoxy"] bishops have betrayed you once again*. As the ecumenistic bishops have demonstrated time and again in their official declarations, they simply are not Orthodox any longer.

I think it is important to point out that many Coptic and Ethiopian bishops, clergy and people have visited our monastery [in Brookline, MA] over the years, and they have been warmly welcomed. I must say, in many ways, they have a piety and simplicity and reverence that, I fear, is missing in many visitors who belong to the various ["World Orthodoxy"] SCOBA jurisdictions. In addition, we are on extremely good terms and have a very warm friendship with the local Coptic priest and his presbytera. They are

wonderful and warm people, and I certainly wish that we were in communion with them, because we see so much in them that is good. But, alas, because of the points I raised above, there can be no joint prayers or intercommunion with them until the doctrinal matters are resolved.

I hope this has explained our concerns.

In Christ,  
✠ Ephraim, Metropolitan

*My final comment: So, who is "out of the Church"? The Orthodox Christian who "follows in the footsteps of the Holy Fathers," or the one who calls himself Orthodox, but does not follow the doctrines of the Holy Fathers?*

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## **I AM A MAN UNDER AUTHORITY**

Or

**Don't Head for the Refrigerator!**

### Part Four

In public speaking, there is a maxim which *should* be followed by all who have to make speeches. It is: "Be sincere. Be brief. Be seated!"

So, I'll try to follow this good advice here.

Recently, a former ROCOR priest, who is now with us, wrote a note to Father Isaac, the Abbott of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, in Brookline, Massachusetts. What he said, in essence, was that priests who spread falsehoods drive him crazy. This, he says, makes him very upset and bitter, and, if he were of another nationality, it would drive him to drink. "Instead," he says, "I head for the refrigerator." This makes him gain weight, and, since he is diabetic, the results are catastrophic for his physical health.

Father Isaac made a very nice reply, which I would like to share with you. This is what Father Isaac wrote:

"My take on people who tell falsehoods: if their falsehoods are in the personal realm, than they will have to work that out *personally* with our Saviour. When they tell falsehoods about the Faith and make compromises with the Faith, *then that affects*



*the souls of many other [millions of] people; then it wounds me and I consider them traitors."*

So, what is the conclusion we must draw from this — especially those of us who are bishops and priests in the Church? We must *not* drive our faithful to drink, or make them head for the refrigerator!

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### **THE THREE STREAMS**

Or

**Jesuits Know What Side Their Audiences Are Buttered On**

Some fifteen years ago, a student from the nearby new calendar seminary came by the monastery and told me about an interesting event that had taken place just a couple of days before.

It seems a Jesuit priest had been invited to speak there at the seminary to a large assembly of the local Greek-American community. As I recall, the subject of his talk was Saint Gregory Palamas and Thomas Aquinas, and their contributions to the theology of the Orthodox Church and to Roman Catholicism, respectively.

During the course of his talk, the Jesuit priest made the following point (according to the student who reported this to me):

"When we in the West look at Byzantium in the East, we see a great civilization that had three major streams of tradition running through it.

"The first stream — actually a mighty torrent, a great river — was the tradition of the Church Fathers: Saint Basil the Great, Saint Athanasius the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Maximus the Confessor, Saint John of Damascus, and all the other eminent Fathers who articulated the Church's doctrines in the Ecumenical Councils of the early centuries.

"The second stream of tradition that we see — another mighty torrent — are the Monastic Fathers: Saint John of the Ladder, Saint Isaac of Syria, the Lausaic History, Saint Maximus the Confessor again, and all the Fathers whose works are found in the *Philokalia*.

"And then there is this tiny little stream — actually, sometimes just a

minute little trickle that almost disappears, but manages somehow to survive from generation to generation all the way through Byzantium's more than one thousand year-long history. That is the wonderful classical tradition of the great philosophers of Ancient Greece: Plato, Aristotle and the others.

"Now, it seems to us here in the West, that the work of the re-unification of our Churches would be greatly expedited if the Greek Orthodox peoples of today could once again embrace and espouse their wonderful ancient heritage: the great philosophers of Ancient Greece."

At that point, the Greek-American audience broke into wild and enthusiastic applause.

The student who was relating this incident to me was thoroughly scandalized. He asked me, "For Heaven's sake, what does the re-embracing of our pagan heritage have to do with the re-union of the Churches?!"

"Everything!", I responded. "If you espouse the values of the ancient Greeks, you will soon be speaking the same language as the Western 'theologians'. After that, it will only be a matter of time before you are one with them in the way you think."

You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure this out. This is what the "Latin Captivity" is all about.

But we must admit: the Jesuit priest made a *very* astute observation: returning to our pagan philosophical heritage will certainly expedite the "re-union of the Churches."

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### **ONLY THE BIBLE —AND OTHER FALSE DOCTRINES—**

Have you heard the one about Mama Mouse, who decided to teach her children how to steal cheese? Well, one dark night, Mama Mouse led her children into the kitchen so that she could show them how to steal cheese. The children were tippy-toeing silently in single file behind their mom as they approached the kitchen table, on top of which a large plateful of cheese rested.

The trouble was, right under the table where the cheese was, a cat

was snoozing on the floor.

At this point, Mama Mouse turned to her children, and whispered, "Okay kids, watch this!"

Then she turned toward the cat, cleared her throat quietly, cupped her little front paws in front of her mouth to form a small bull-horn, as it were, and then she ROARED, barking like an angry dog: "AARF!, AARF!, GRRR!, AARF!".

Alarmed on hearing the ferocious barking, the cat woke with a start, and raced out of the room with a terrified screech.

Then, very calmly, Mama Mouse turned to her children again, and said, "You see children? It's always useful to know another language!"

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Recently, one of our faithful was talking with a Protestant pastor. The pastor said to our Orthodox Christian, "When we are talking about the Christian Faith, I don't want to hear anything about your traditions. *Only* the Bible. That's the *only* source on which we can base our discussion. I don't want to hear, nor will I accept anything else."

How many times has each of us heard this argument?

There is only one problem with this doctrine; it is *un-Biblical!* In fact, the Bible tells us the exact opposite.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul writes:

Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ.  
Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in  
all things, and keep the *traditions* as I delivered  
them to you.

(1 Cor: 11:1-2)

In his second letter to the Thessalonians, he writes:

Brethren, we command you in the name of our Lord  
Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every  
brother who walketh disorderly and not according to  
the *tradition* which he received from us. For ye  
yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us.

(II Thess 3:6)

And, again, in the same letter, he writes:

So then, brethren, stand firm and hold the *traditions* that you have learned, *whether by word or by letter of ours*.

(II Thess. 2:15)

It is true that some English translations of these passages use the words, "teachings," or "precepts," or "ordinances," instead of "traditions." In itself, this is fine: would that everyone kept the teachings and the precepts that Saint Paul taught us. But this is not what the Greek text of the New Testament says. The Greek words for "teaching" or "precept" are *didaskalía* or *didaché*. These are *not* the words Saint Paul uses. In the above-mentioned texts, Saint Paul *always* uses the word *parádosis* (pl. *paradóseis*), which in the Greek language has always, and still does, and probably forever will mean "tradition" – "something handed over," "a heritage," something "bequeathed."

There is only one place where Saint Paul warns us *against* tradition. In his letter to the Colossians, he writes:

Brethren, beware lest any man spoil you through *philosophy* and vain deceit, *according to the tradition of men*, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ.

(Col. 2:8)

Here is the great irony! The Protestants, who are always preaching to others about *not* keeping the traditions of men, are – together with *all* of Western "theology" – condemned here by Saint Paul for following after the traditions of men, with their false doctrines of "*Sola Scriptura*" ("only the Scriptures"). That, and the pagan Greek philosophy of the Latin Scholastics, have been two blights on Western theology.

According to the Holy Scriptures, there are God-inspired traditions that we must keep, and there are the philosophies and traditions of men that we must avoid.

Mama Mouse was right: "It's always useful to know another language."

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## **THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD** Is Not of This World

We have been complaining about the role of Rationalism — or, as Saint Paul might call it, "Greek wisdom" — in the field of Theology. What is the exact nature of our complaint? After all, God gave us the ability to reason and to think things through reasonably and rationally. Is this wrong? Are we being unreasonable about Rationalism?

Perhaps a small explanation is in order here.

We use our reason everywhere. We need it to get along in this world. We need it to be able to write and read this article. We need it to pay our grocery bill (and not get short-changed); we need it in order to discern good from evil.

But sometimes our reason falters.

We cannot see distant stars and galaxies, except with help, i.e., a telescope.

Our senses have physical limitations. So, for example, if we want to see something small better, we use a magnifying glass. If we want to hear better, we get a hearing aid, or special listening devices (especially if we work for the CIA or KGB).

Our human reason also has its limitations, and therefore needs help, or rather, doesn't work at all, in certain applications.

For example, when the newly-appeared Saints Raphael, Nicholas and the young girl Irene began in the 1960's to reveal the facts about their martyrdom on the Greek Island of Lesbos, their revelations overturned the very foundations of Rationalism.

People "dead" for some 550 years, appeared and began to tell us how they were inhumanly put to death by their Moslem tormentors.

Or, as one person put it, "We who still fear death were speaking to people who no longer fear death."

Several people — about seven — on the same island had the same dream on the same night about the formerly unknown Saints.

Saint Raphael told them, "If you dig here, you will find the skeleton of

my body." So, the villagers who saw these dreams hired workers to dig where the Saint had indicated that his bones were. The workers — most of them unbelievers and Communists — started digging in the cement-like earth to excavate the bones, and they complained bitterly to those who had hired them to work, "Look. You're wasting our time and your money. This earth is rock hard. It has never been touched. We're not going to find *anything* here."

The villagers who hired them responded, "It's our money, and since you are being paid well to do this, just continue digging. If we find nothing, it is our loss."

Grumbling, the workers continued until — *voilà!* — they discovered a skeleton with no skull. The skull was about a foot away. But there was no jawbone. "You will have to dig over *here* to find the Saint's jawbone, because that is where the Moslem Turks threw it, as the Saint told us," explained the villagers.

The now contrite workers began again to dig in the rock-solid earth. When, at length, they discovered the jawbone also where the Saint had indicated (over 30 feet away, and almost five feet down), the formerly unbelieving workers solemnly made the sign of the cross. The jawbone was not with the Saint's skull, because, as the Saint had revealed, his executioners had cut off his head by sawing it off through his mouth.

When they found the jawbone, it had the marks of the saw on it. Many of the formerly unbelieving workers were weeping openly now.

Then the Saints appeared again and told the villagers, "If you dig here, you will find the Light of the world." Now, what could this cryptic message mean? You dig in the earth to find light?

Once again, with pick-axes and shovels, the workers began to dig. After they had gone down some feet, one worker began to shovel out the clods of earth from the hole in order to clear out the digging area. One clod of earth sailed through the air and smashed on the surface. A shiny object glinted in the bright sun where the clod had landed and broken, and so someone went over to see what it was. He brushed off the dirt and saw that it was a coin. In fact, it was a Byzantine coin from the fourteenth century — about sixty years before the time when Saints Raphael, Nicholas and Irene had suffered martyrdom. On the coin was an image of our Saviour, Jesus Christ — the Light of the World.

Human rationality *cannot* handle information like this.

Our eyesight is not engineered to handle seeing the radio waves and television waves that saturate our atmosphere. The fuses of our eyes would "blow out" from the over-load of information pouring into our brains.

In like manner, our rationality cannot reach into the supernatural world. It needs divine grace to replace its "abilities". Or, as we chant in the Great Doxology, "*In Thy light we shall see light.*" That is to say, *in Thy grace*, we will see grace and the mysteries of God.

The birds who live in the trees are able to see and hear all sorts of things that we cannot. They are able to perceive a spectrum of colors that our eyes cannot see. They can pick up sounds that are far beyond our range of hearing. So, although we live side by side — they in their trees, and we in our houses — we each live in a very different world because we perceive different things around us.

Like the birds in the trees, the Saints see and hear things that we cannot — unless God and those who partake of His grace choose to reveal them to us. Or, unless God gives *us* His uncreated illumination.

That, essentially, is our complaint about Rationalism. In spiritual matters, it doesn't go where we need to go. It will not get us to our destination.

As Saint Isaac of Syria would say in his description of the "Three Degrees of Knowledge:"

1. In the First Degree (the sciences and the knowledge of the world), Rationalism works fine.
2. In the Second Degree (the life of piety and love for God), Rationalism gives a helping hand — *sometimes* — to our faith.
3. In the Third Degree (divine revelation, God's grace), Rationalism falls flat on its face.

Our reason is darkened, and cannot perceive or comprehend the Light of the world.

"In Him was life; and the life was the Light of men. And the Light shineth in darkness; *and the darkness comprehended It not.*"

(John 1:4)

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## THE ACADEMY OF SAINT SYMEON THE NEW THEOLOGIAN

(In Memory of Professor Panayiótes Trembélas)

Some of you may have noticed that in some of my past articles I have been taking pot-shots at "licensed theologians" and some seminary professors. Seminaries, as we know, are a Roman Catholic invention of the seventeenth century. After that, Latin-type seminaries began to appear in the Orthodox Catholic east, as well.

Perhaps there is no need to go into all the flaws that seminaries have. In the past, I have already described to you some of those flaws. To be fair, I should mention also the positive aspects of seminaries.

1. The first positive thing that comes to mind about seminaries is time. Yes, time; for one has at his disposal a generous amount of time for *study*. One has time to study Church History, the services of the Church, the teachings of the Church, the life in Christ. All this, without the distractions of a secular job, a family, house payments, etc.
2. One also has a lot of resources at one's fingertips. The seminary library, knowledgeable and experienced (presumably) scholars and mentors.
3. One has the valuable companionship of like-minded friends, with whom one can exchange insights and information. One may form life-long friendships there, too.

I mentioned in an earlier article how an Orthodox Catholic "academy" could be organized. What I and other fathers of our Church envision is something like the following:

A home where young men who are at least eighteen years of age and have finished high school could live for about a year's time. During that time, under the tutorship of a local clergyman, they would have the following schedule:

- a) A strict schedule of prayers and study. The students would be obliged to have morning prayers in the house chapel, and also Vespers in the evening, and Small Compline.
- b) They would be obliged to read the Lives of the Saints for each day.



- c) They would probably be obliged to study some Church Greek and possibly another "Orthodox" language (i.e., a language rich in Orthodox Christian literature).
- d) They would be given some basic textbooks on Church History, the Holy Canons, and, perhaps, Patrology.
- e) It would be useful and instructive for them to read the full Menaion Services for each day.
- f) There would be an ample library for research purposes.
- g) There should be lessons in chanting and in the *Typikon* (the rubrics for a service).
- h) The local clergy could take the students with them on pastoral visits, or have them observe, help and chant at various services — like baptisms, weddings, funerals, holy unction, etc.
- i) This home (let's call it "The Academy of Saint Symeon the New Theologian" — in memory of Professor Panayiotes Trembelas of the University of Athens. If you have read the article *Not Licensed Theologians*, you know why we are dedicating it to Saint Symeon the New Theologian and doing this in memory of Dr. Panayiotes Trembelas). It probably should be located in the Boston area, so as to be near our largest monastery, convent, and the parish churches there.
- j) I'm certain the Abbot of the monastery would be overjoyed to offer the few students a meal or two every day. The students could take care of breakfast themselves, if they wanted one.
- k) The students probably would be asked to pay a token fee, to cover the expenses of the house utilities.

All we need now is one million dollars to buy a house appropriate for this purpose, furnish it, and provide an ample library. The million dollars are actually the least of my concerns. If everyone prays hard enough, all this will come to pass, if it is God's will.

Any Orthodox suggestions?

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### **THE ANCIENT TYPIKON**

#### **For An Elephant Funeral**

(Slightly edited from "The Form of Holy Baptism")

*And John was also baptizing in Ænon near to Salim,  
because there was much water there."*

(John 3:23)

## Immersion By Immersion

In speaking about Baptism, we need to know the exact meaning of the word. This is especially important when we are discussing the correct form of Baptism.

Baptism is a Greek word, and so we have to turn to the Greeks to find out what they meant by this word. As the saying goes, "The Greeks have a word for it." (Here, alas, the bitter truth must be confessed: sometimes, they don't have a word for it. For example, there is no Greek word for "toe." What we call "toes" are known in Greek as "the fingers of the foot," or maybe "little fingers." So, if you look carefully [in a Greek lexicon], you will see that Greeks don't have toes.)

They did have a word for "baptism," however, and that word is *báptisma*; they had a verb too: *baptizein* — "to baptize." What did the ancient Greeks mean when they called something "baptized"? Hippocrates used the word to refer to something that was *drenched*. Eubulus the comedian used the word in reference to drunkards who were "*soaked* in wine." Plato used the term to describe debtors who were "*over their head in debt*." And in regard to someone who was being interrogated, he used it to mean "he was *drowned* with questions; he was getting into deep water." And finally, the historian Polybius refers to ships that were "*baptized*" during a sea battle, that is, they had been sunk right down to the bottom.

At the risk of repeating a good story to an audience that may already have heard it, a few years ago a Roman Catholic priest came by our monastery [before I had been made a bishop], and I happened to be on telephone duty. During our talk, he asked, "Is it true that you Orthodox baptize by immersion?" I told him, "Well, you must know that 'baptism' is a Greek word that means 'immersion.' So, what you're really asking me is if we immerse by immersion, and the answer to that is: 'Yes!'"

But why is *immersion* so important? Because it is a figure and symbol of Christ's death and burial. As we see in Saint Paul's epistle to the Romans:

Know ye not that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death, so that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted

together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.

(Romans 6:3-5)

In one of his homilies, Saint John Chrysostom notes that other people fish by pulling the fish out of the water, and they die; whereas we Christians fish by throwing the fish into the water, and they come to life! (*On the Holy Pascha*, Migne, PG 50, 437).

The complete immersion or submersion of a person in Baptism is the figure of the death of the old man, and his emergence from the water as one reborn is a figure of renewal and the consecration of a new life in the figure of the Resurrection. We do not bury people by sprinkling a handful of earth over their heads, or by shaking a little shovel full of dirt over them. No, we bury them completely, deep in the earth. Immersion, that is, Baptism, is one thing and sprinkling is another. They are not the same, and that is why the Holy Scriptures make a point of telling us that Saint John the Forerunner was baptizing at  $\square$ non near Salim, "because there was much water there." Indeed, why should Saint John the Baptist, or our Saviour, take the trouble to go all the way down to the Jordan River if any little washbasin elsewhere would have served the same purpose?

Assuredly, just as sprinkling a little earth over the head of a dead man does not count as burial, even so does sprinkling a little water over one's head not amount to Baptism, neither does it serve as a symbol of the death of our old self, nor even as a "likeness" of the death and burial of our Saviour.

### **The Elephant Typikon**

Even elephants have more sense in this particular regard.

Have any of you ever been to an elephant funeral? Now, there's a funeral for you! Their time-honored observances in this matter are certainly most impressive. First of all, the prescribed *Typikon* calls for the herd to begin a somber procession in a circle around the body of the newly-departed, accompanied by a lot of mournful trumpeting and the solemn stomping of the feet. Then the bereaved elephants go off in different directions and break leafy branches off the trees. They carry these back in their trunks and use them to bury the carcass of the deceased. Note that they don't just sprinkle a few leaves or throw a couple of roses over the body. No indeed. They completely bury it under the branches. So, in this case at least, even the elephants have more sense than some people do. Instinctively, the wise

elephant knows that when one is dead, one is dead and buried, not dead and sprinkled.

Returning to our own, too often less circumspect species, we observe that all the ancient authorities, including the Holy Scriptures, bear witness to the Orthodox tradition of *immersion*.

Here is what some ancient canons say about Holy Baptism:

*46<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Canon*

We ordain that a bishop or presbyter who has admitted the baptism or sacrifice of heretics be deposed. For what concord hath Christ with Beliar, or what part hath a believer with an infidel?

*47<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Canon*

Let a bishop or presbyter who shall baptize again one who has rightly received Baptism, or who shall not baptize one who has been polluted by the ungodly, be deposed, as despising the Cross and death of the Lord, and not making a distinction between the true priests and the false.

*68<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Canon*

If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon shall receive from anyone a second ordination, let both the ordained and the ordainer be deposed, unless indeed it be proved that he had his ordination from heretics; for those who have been baptized or ordained by such persons cannot be either of the faithful or of the clergy.

*Canon I of the Local Council of Carthage*

That those baptized by heretics shall be rebaptized to be admitted to the Church.

*Canon 84 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council*

Following the canonical institutions of the Fathers, we order that whoever does not know nor can prove by documents that he has been baptized, he must without any hesitation be baptized.

In Church History, of course, we know of many instances that call for the discreet use of *economia* in receiving people into the Church.

## **Two Coins In The Fountain**

But, since the correct faith is so important, what did many early Christians believe about the "baptism" of the non-Orthodox?

On December seventh, we celebrate the memory of a certain Orthodox woman of Rome. Her name is unknown to us, but we must surely call her blessed. In the year 474, the Arians raised up a terrible persecution against the Orthodox Catholic Christians. Sunilda, the wife of the Arian ruler of Rome, took it upon herself to attempt to force one Orthodox woman to accept the baptism of the Arians. The woman would not consent, so the Arians seized her, took her by force to one of their churches, and immersed her into the water in the presence of the Arian bishop.

As she came out of the water, she turned to her handmaid who was holding a purse. She took two coins out of the purse, handed them to the Arian bishop, and said to him, "Thanks for the bath."

This so enraged the Arians, they dragged her out of their temple, tied her to a post, and burned her alive.

In her, truly, are fulfilled the words of King David the Prophet: "We went through fire and water, and Thou didst bring us out into refreshment" (Psalm 65:12).

By her intercessions, and of those of all the Saints, may we be counted worthy of the Heavenly Kingdom. Amen.

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## **OUR SIDE ALWAYS WINS**

It's true. The picture is bleak.

Despite the fact that thirty-one states in the United States have already rejected "gay marriage", the Federal Government is, evidently, unhappy with the "voice of the people." That is why the Congress passed legislation against "hate crimes," aimed, primarily, at those who are not happy with the abortionist or homosexual agenda.

But any intelligent person understands that, just because you disagree with someone's views, does not mean that you hate the individual who holds them. As Christians, we are taught to "hate the sin, but love the sinner."

Why? Because if we hated the sinner, we would wind up hating everybody! Including ourselves. We are taught, therefore, to love the sinner, because we *all* fall short of the glory of God, in one way or another.

However, the picture is nevertheless bleak. It's almost getting to the point that, when you use the term "mixed marriage," it means a marriage between a normal man and a normal woman.

There is a lighter side to this whole matter also. Some months ago, Arnold Schwarzenegger, the governor of California, was asked if he supported gay couples: "Yes!" he replied enthusiastically, "I fully support gay couples — that is, a happily married heterosexual man and heterosexual woman!"

Yet, despite the desperate efforts of our media to convince us that there is a "gay gene", science has failed to discover such a gene so far. Therefore, most people remain unconvinced and remain opposed to the agenda of the homosexual lobby, just as the tide is turning against the abortion advocates also.

But the "amorality" lobby is determined.

There are many in our generation who "don't like restrictions." When they say "restrictions," however, do they realize what they are saying? Restrictions like "Do not kill," "Do not steal," "Do not commit adultery," "Do not bear false witness," and others?? If that is so, well, then they are in for a whale of a time with the society they are creating for themselves. Or perhaps they prefer the other extreme, the Islamic restrictions, with the beheadings and mutilations?

It should be clear to many by now that our society is reverting to its pre-Christian ways. In the dismissal hymn for Saint Basil the Great, it says, "thou hast adorned the ways of man." But now, many people are diligently stripping themselves of that Christian adornment that God and His Saints bestowed on us to cover our shame. Society seems to be donning the harsh garments of paganism again.

Thus, we see many people — including "Christians" — unthinkingly absorbing the fashions and ideologies of the pagan society around them, without stopping to think how this might conflict with the God-given beliefs of millions of Christian martyrs and saints who have gone before us. How many people, for example, have the television set, or the local newspaper, or various websites, as their true spiritual fathers, and they follow their counsels blindly? They want to be called "Orthodox Christians," but only on

their own, and the world's, terms.

The picture is indeed bleak. But before we begin to feel sorry for ourselves as we look at how the world seems to be going, we should have one thing in mind: our side always wins.

This is so, not only because of our faith in the Resurrection. There is also another facet to this story, which tends to get overlooked. What is that facet? People who support abortion tend to kill most of their offspring. Homosexual marriages, on their part, are "infertile" and will have no children.

What does this mean?

It means that, eventually, we are going to out-breed them!!

Our side always wins!

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## **A JEWISH HOLIDAY**

As I have mentioned elsewhere\*, the Jewish people had a very great love for the Septuagint for centuries. Why? Because they had forgotten Hebrew and spoke only Greek or Aramaic. Consequently, the Septuagint translation was the only way they could understand their Holy Scriptures. The other advantage was that the Septuagint became the cause for thousands of pagans to convert to Judaism.

Philo, a contemporary of our Saviour, was one of Judaism's greatest apologists and defenders. Through the many tracts that he wrote, many converted to Judaism. Yet, as we know, Philo knew no Hebrew and based all his texts on the Septuagint.

But with the appearance of Christianity, all those pagan converts and thousands of the Jews themselves began to turn to and espouse the Christian Faith. In view of the fact that the Septuagint was so effective in the hands of the Apostles, this caused a sharp and desperate reaction among the leaders of the Jewish religion, and they renounced the Septuagint. What had formerly been a day of celebration for them was turned into a day of

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\*See the pamphlet, "Why Orthodox Christians Prefer the Septuagint."

mourning and grief. Even Philo's valuable tracts were all renounced.

Essentially, in their desperation, the teachers of Israel reverted to a text (the Ancient Hebrew Bible) which only they, the rabbis, could read and understand, *but which was incomprehensible to virtually all of their people*.

Yet, as writer Alexander Zvielli points out (*Jerusalem Post*, June, 2009, p. 37) both Philo (known more fully as Philo Judaicus of Alexandria, c. 20 B. C.—A. D. 50) and Josephus Flavius (A. D. 38—A. D. 100) respected the Septuagint highly. In fact, the popularity of the Septuagint in the ancient Jewish community and the Hellenistic world is undeniable.

Zvielli writes: "Although some modern scholars claim that the *Letter of Aristeas* (which describes how the Septuagint was translated), is an imaginative composition written for the sole purpose of presenting the Jewish people, Jerusalem and Judea in a favorable light, *The Letter* presents us with a contemporary record and a valuable window into the past. It is written with the personal knowledge of an eye-witness, Aristeas, an officer at the court of the Egyptian emperor Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-247 B. C.), who addresses his brother Philocrates, and we are informed in the *Letter* that Ptolemy discovered that there were no translations of the Jewish Law in his world-famous library of Alexandria and, consequently, he demanded that Eleazar, the High Priest of Jerusalem, send him skilled translators to rectify the situation.

"Eleazar found this request "contrary to nature," and hesitated to comply, but since Judea was under Ptolemy's rule, he had no choice.

"Accordingly, seventy-two (hence, "Septuagint" — from the Latin for "seventy") hand-picked Judean scribes left for Alexandria, where their translating skills in both Hebrew and Greek, as well as their general knowledge, was tested by the king himself. The sages answered many difficult questions, and took special care to explain to the king some Jewish customs, such as circumcision and the dietary laws, which were often ridiculed in pagan Hellenistic society.

"Ptolemy was highly satisfied with this knowledgeable team, and hosted it lavishly on the Island of Pharos, off the Alexandrian coast where the famous lighthouse once stood. The Law was soon translated, precious gifts were exchanged, the translators returned home, and Ptolemy released all Jewish prisoners of war he held.

"In his *Life of Moses* (vii: 41-2), Philo writes that an annual festival was still held at Pharos in his day to celebrate the translation of the Septuagint.



He witnessed a joyous festival, in which not only Jews, but a great number of "persons of other nations sailed across the bay to honor the place where the first light of interpretation shone forth, and to thank God for that ancient piece of beneficence... And after the prayers and the giving of thanks, some of them pitched their tents on the shore, and some of them lay down without any tents in the open air on the sand of the shore, and feasted with their relations and friends, thinking the shore at that time a more beautiful abode than the furniture of the king's palace."

Two thousand, three hundred years after its appearance, the Septuagint is still the most unbiased record of God's revelation to His people. And that is why we, the new Israel, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, still cherish it.

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## THE LOOPHOLE

In the *Patericon*, there is an account about an old man who decided to become a monk in the final years of his earthly life. Consequently, he went to the nearby monastery and spoke to the abbot about the calling he had to the monastic life. Looking at the old man's gray hairs, the abbot was reluctant to receive the old fellow, to say the least.

"You want to become a monk *now*?" asked the dubious abbot. "You're too old. You won't be able to keep the rule, the fasting, the midnight services. You are used to your ways, and you are too settled in your own routine now. You won't be able to do it."

"All I'm asking for is the opportunity to try," replied the old man.

Finally, because of the old man's pleading, the abbot gave in, and the old fellow was enrolled among the novices.

Well, as a matter of fact, the abbot had been right. The monastic discipline was a bit too rigorous for the old fellow. After the monks had eaten, he would linger in the refectory to sneak a snack. At the midnight service, he came in late, and often snoozed during the prayers. Sometimes it would be too much for him, and he would leave the service early, and return to his cell to rest.

While all this was going on, it just so happened one day — it was a

Sunday afternoon, a day when everyone rested — the monks were gathered together in the monastery's garden area. Like the good monks that they were, they began to talk about the Last Judgment, and what each one would say in defense before that dread tribunal. One said, "I have no good deeds at all, so I will plead for mercy." Another one said, "I won't be able to say anything whatsoever, because I will be overcome with weeping as I think about my past and present sins." And so on.

As each one was saying such and similar things, one of the fathers finally turned to the old man, and said, "And you, brother, what are you going to say when that awful moment arrives?"

"Me? Oh, I'm not worried about the Last Judgment at all. In fact, I hardly ever think about it."

"WHAT?" everyone cried out with one voice. "*You*, of *all* people? *You're* not worried? Well, you should *really* be worried, because you are so lax at fasting, and at your prayer rule, and at everything! Goodness gracious! *You're* not worried?"

Of course, in speaking like this to the old man, they had demonstrated conclusively that they had already judged and condemned him in their hearts.

"Nope. I'm not worried at all, because I know for certain that I am not going to be judged," replied the old fellow.

"WHAT?," cried out the monks in unison once again. "What are you talking about? Have you lost your mind? Of course, you're going to be judged, just like everybody else, old man!"

"Nope," insisted the old timer. "I know for *certain* that I will not be judged, because when it comes time for me to stand before the tribunal of Christ, and He is about to judge me, I'm going to say, 'Wait, wait, Your Honor, Sir, Lord Jesus, you can't judge me!' And our Saviour is going to say, 'What do you mean I can't judge you? I'm in charge here!'"

"No, no. You can't judge me. And I'll tell You why. Right here, in Your Book, in the New Testament (Matt. 7:1), it says, 'Judge not, *that ye be not judged!*' There. So, since I've been *very, very* careful about not judging others, You can't judge *me*."

And our Saviour will say:

"You're right! Very well, you may enter into My Paradise, together with the others who are standing there on the right side."

When the old man had finished speaking, the monks all looked at him in astonishment with their mouths hanging open. They were speechless.

The old man had found a loophole!

And, to top it all, the *Patericon* tells us that the old man had a righteous end....

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## **LOOPHOLE TWO**

Some people have written to me and said, "We read 'The Loophole,' but it's too late for us. We have judged many people already."

Actually, it's never too late — especially for any intelligent Orthodox Christian.

Why?

Have you ever heard of Holy Confession?

If you confess your sin of judging others, and then cross your heart and promise that you won't do it again, you will be forgiven. And even if you slip and do it again, if you rise from your fall, confess it, and try again, the stain of that sin will be washed away. It's the same with any sin. No matter how many times we fall, we must get up and try again. And again. And so on, until we depart from this earthly existence.

So, do you see how many loopholes our Saviour has given us? Not one, not two, but an infinite number. All we have to do is say, "I'm sorry. I'll try again."

See how easy our Saviour has made it for us to be saved?!

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